



EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE WEST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Project Number: 3017425

Address: 1319 Dexter Avenue North

Applicant: Blair Stone, Ankrom Moisan Architects, for Shea Properties

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, August 20, 2014

Board Members Present: Boyd Pickrell (Acting Chair)
Jill Kurfirst
Christine Harrington
Janet Stephenson

Board Members Absent: Mindy Black

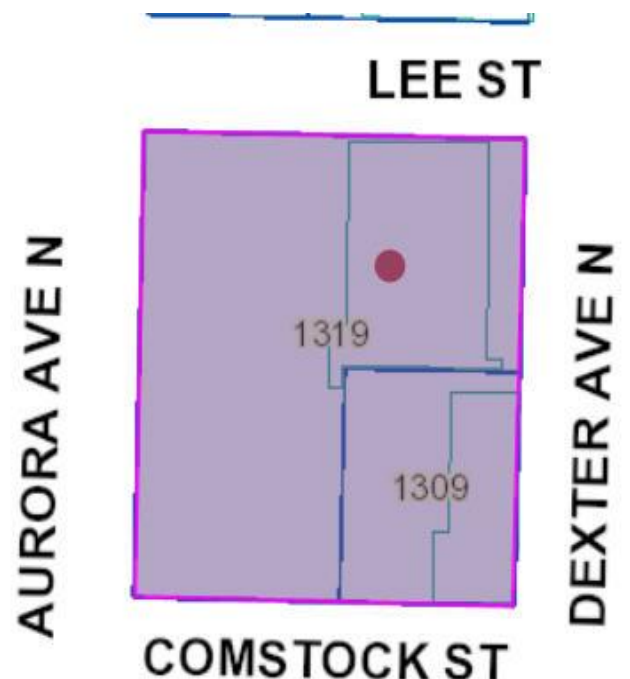
DPD Staff Present: Michael Dorcy

SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: SM85

Nearby Zones: (North) SM85
(South) SM85
(East) SM85/65-125
(West) LR3RC

Lot Area: 50,183 SF



Current Development:

The site is currently occupied by a four story apartment building, a three story commercial office building and existing surface parking.

Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:

The “Dexter Neighborhood” along the western edge of Lake Union and abutting Queen Anne hill provides a mixture of housing and commercial office uses, with a scattering of earlier maritime support businesses. Substantial development, a mixture of commercial office and large residential and mixed-use buildings, is currently being planned or under review for the area. The area has a “Walkscore” of 86, “very walkable,” “Transitscore” of 71, “excellent transit,” and a “Bikescore” of 71, “very bikeable.” Dexter Avenue N. is an established major bike route from the northern part of the city to downtown.

Access:

Existing vehicular circulation to the site is from Lee Street. The proposed vehicle access point of the preferred option is from Comstock Street.

Environmentally Critical Areas:

The site slopes from a low point at the southeast corner to a point 65 feet higher at the southwest corner. Steep slopes (40% average, ECA-1) characterize approximately the western half of the development site. There is a mapped “Known slide” area at the southwest corner of the site.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant is proposing a full block mixed use development, with 300 residential units, 5,800 SF of retail at ground level and parking below grade for 212 vehicles.

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING August 20, 2014
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The packet includes materials presented at the meeting, and is available online by entering the project number (3017425) at this website:

http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Project_Reviews/Reports/default.asp.

The packet is also available to view in the file, by contacting the Public Resource Center at DPD:

Mailing Public Resource Center

Address: 700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000
P.O. Box 34019

Seattle, WA 98124-4019

Email: PRC@seattle.gov

APPLICANTS' PRESENTATION

As explained by the Design Team, there is an older four-story apartment building located at the corner of Comstock Street and Dexter Avenue N. Due to a backlog of projects to review, the Landmarks Board review of this building has not taken place. It is the applicants' wish to proceed with design development of new construction on the entire block, and presented 3 options based upon a full-block buildout, with the understanding that Landmark status and controls could be placed on the existing apartment building. Optional site development with the apartment building being preserved on site was briefly shown to the Board (as is presented on pp.36-50 of the EDG packet, available on-line).

The preferred alternative, with the apartment building gone, would locate an "L"-shaped structure with its pivot point located at the northwest corner of the site and a second structure, connected by a bridge at the north end, was canted in a northwest direction so that it pulled back slightly from Dexter Avenue N. There was some discussion among the Board members weighing the values of retaining the existing apartment building. Some members of the Board encouraged the development team to continue looking for ways to incorporate the older apartment into the plans to develop the entire site, but the Board was agreed that the preferred option with the "L"-shaped structured with its back to Aurora Avenue N. and to Lee Street, separated by a courtyard from the canted smaller structure facing onto Dexter Avenue N. was the more elegant design for a full-block build-out and offered the most promise for new development of the entire site.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comments: 1) cautioned against planting trees on the abutting side streets (Lee & Comstock) since leaves and other by-products has been a source of safety concerns; 2) requested curtailing the height of the proposed structure to mitigate the impact on views of the lake from Queen Anne hill; 3) urged the developers to keep to a tiered shape as the building went up the hill, a more traditional form and one that would lessen the "canyon effect" along Dexter Avenue; 4) lobbied for more retail space at ground level, an element missing in much of the newer development but essential for building community; 5) opined that the size and rate of development in the immediate area was overwhelming the existing infrastructure of utilities, roads and services.

PRIORITIES & BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS: AUGUST 20, 2014
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After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents, and hearing public comment, the Design Review Board members provided the following siting and design guidance.

Among the Board's major issues regarding the proposal were the following:

- While the Dexter Avenue N. manipulation of parts and treatment of the massing bestowed character and interest to the proposal, the Aurora Avenue N. façade was “too monolithic.” The continuous light-well trough between sidewalk and building imparted a “moat and castle” feeling, which may have captured the prevailing Aurora character but did nothing to improve the pedestrian experience along that frontage. The moat was potentially an interesting feature, but unless it received some very special attention, through bridging and greening, for instance, it would be “a sad space.”
- It was agreed that the auto entry should be on Comstock Street, but the façade facing the hill-climb should not be blank or bleak which were the countervailing pulls of topography garage opening.
- The Lee Street façade also needed portals and penetrations, landscaping, grooved pavement, handrails....
- On Dexter Avenue N. spaces given to retail seemed too small, the amount given to leasing office too big, proportionately. The ground floor space along the south side needed to be thought about more intentionally, as did the entire distribution of ground floor spaces.
- The announced conceptual theme of earth and water was intriguing, but how specifically was this being worked out in terms of the ground floor plane? How did the conceptual impart architectural character to the proposal?
- The cant of the front structure was critical to the success of the overall design. Was it enough to impart a meaningful pedestrian experience. Consider a variety of views, from the streets, from the lake.
- Does the building celebrate as well as accommodate bicycles?
- Don't overlook stepping as a time-honored massing gesture of structures hunkering down on the east slope of Queen Anne hill.
- How do you do garbage?

DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

The priority Citywide and Neighborhood guidelines identified by the Board as Priority Guidelines are summarized below, while all guidelines remain applicable. For the full text please visit the [Design Review website](#).

CONTEXT & SITE

CS1 Natural Systems and Site Features: Use natural systems/features of the site and its surroundings as a starting point for project design.

CS1-B Sunlight and Natural Ventilation

CS1-B-1. Sun and Wind: Take advantage of solar exposure and natural ventilation. Use local wind patterns and solar gain to reduce the need for mechanical ventilation and heating where possible.

CS1-B-2. Daylight and Shading: Maximize daylight for interior and exterior spaces and minimize shading on adjacent sites through the placement and/or design of structures on site.

CS1-C Topography

CS1-C-1. Land Form: Use natural topography and desirable landforms to inform project design.

CS1-C-2. Elevation Changes: Use the existing site topography when locating structures and open spaces on the site.

CS1-E Water

CS1-E-1. Natural Water Features: If the site includes any natural water features, consider ways to incorporate them into project design, where feasible

CS2 Urban Pattern and Form: Strengthen the most desirable forms, characteristics, and patterns of the streets, block faces, and open spaces in the surrounding area.

CS2-A-2. Architectural Presence: Evaluate the degree of visibility or architectural presence that is appropriate or desired given the context, and design accordingly.

CS2-B Adjacent Sites, Streets, and Open Spaces

CS2-B-1. Site Characteristics: Allow characteristics of sites to inform the design, especially where the street grid and topography create unusually shaped lots that can add distinction to the building massing.

CS2-C Relationship to the Block

CS2-C-3. Full Block Sites: Break up long facades of full-block buildings to avoid a monolithic presence. Provide detail and human scale at street-level, and include repeating elements to add variety and rhythm to the façade and overall building design.

CS2-D Height, Bulk, and Scale

CS2-D-5. Respect for Adjacent Sites: Respect adjacent properties with design and site planning to minimize disrupting the privacy of residents in adjacent buildings.

South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance:

CS2-I Responding to Site Characteristics

CS2-I-i. Views: Encourage provision of “outlooks and overlooks” for the public to view the lake and cityscapes. Examples include provision of public plazas and/or other public open spaces and changing the form or facade setbacks of the building to enhance opportunities for views.

CS2-II Height, Bulk, and Scale Compatibility

CS2-II-ii. Upper-level Setbacks: Encourage stepping back an elevation at upper levels for development taller than 55 feet to take advantage of views and increase sunlight at street level. Where stepping back upper floors is not practical or appropriate other design considerations may be considered, such as modulations or separations between structures.

CS3 Architectural Context and Character: Contribute to the architectural character of the neighborhood.

CS3-A Emphasizing Positive Neighborhood Attributes

CS3-A-2. Contemporary Design: Explore how contemporary designs can contribute to the development of attractive new forms and architectural styles; as expressed through use of new materials or other means.

South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance:

CS3-I Height, Bulk, and Scale Compatibility

CS3-I-i. Facade Articulation: Articulate the building facades vertically or horizontally in intervals that relate to the existing structures or existing pattern of development in the vicinity.

CS3-I-ii. Reduce Visual Bulk: Consider using architectural features to reduce building scale such as:

- a. landscaping;
- b. trellis;
- c. complementary materials;
- d. detailing;
- e. accent trim.

CS3-II Architectural Context

CS3-II-ii. Preservation: Re-use and preserve important buildings and landmarks when possible.

CS3-II-v. Industrial Character: Respond to the working class, maritime, commercial and industrial character of the Waterfront and Westlake areas. Examples of elements to consider include:

- a. window detail patterns;
- b. open bay doors;
- c. sloped roofs.

PUBLIC LIFE

PL1 Connectivity: Complement and contribute to the network of open spaces around the site and the connections among them.

PL1-C Outdoor Uses and Activities

PL1-C-1. Selecting Activity Areas: Concentrate activity areas in places with sunny exposure, views across spaces, and in direct line with pedestrian routes.

PL3 Street-Level Interaction: Encourage human interaction and activity at the street-level with clear connections to building entries and edges.

PL3-A Entries

PL3-A-1. Design Objectives: Design primary entries to be obvious, identifiable, and distinctive with clear lines of sight and lobbies visually connected to the street.

PL3-A-4. Ensemble of Elements: Design the entry as a collection of coordinated elements including the door(s), overhead features, ground surface, landscaping, lighting, and other features.

PL3-B Residential Edges

PL3-B-1. Security and Privacy: Provide security and privacy for residential buildings through the use of a buffer or semi-private space between the development and the street or neighboring buildings.

PL3-B-4. Interaction: Provide opportunities for interaction among residents and neighbors.

PL3-C Retail Edges

PL3-C-1. Porous Edge: Engage passersby with opportunities to interact visually with the building interior using glazing and transparency. Create multiple entries where possible and make a physical and visual connection between people on the sidewalk and retail activities in the building.

South Lake Union Supplemental Guidance:

PL3-I Streetscape Compatibility

PL3-I-i. Retail Location: Where appropriate, consider a reduction in the required amount of commercial and retail space at the ground level, such as in transition zones between commercial and residential areas. Place retail in areas that are conducive to the use and will be successful.

PL3-II Human Activity

PL3-II-i. Public/Private Transition: Create graceful transitions at the streetscape level between the public and private uses.

PL3-II-ii. Active Facades: Design facades to encourage activity to spill out from business onto the sidewalk, and vice-versa.

PL3-II-iii. Coordinate Retail/Pedestrian Activity: Reinforce retail concentrations with compatible spaces that encourage pedestrian activity.

PL3-III Transition Between Residence and Street

PL3-III-i. Residential Entries: Consider designing the entries of residential buildings to enhance the character of the streetscape through the use of small gardens, stoops and other elements to create a transition between the public and private areas. Consider design options to accommodate various residential uses, i.e., townhouse, live-work, apartment and senior-assisted housing.

PL4 Active Transportation: Incorporate design features that facilitate active forms of transportation such as walking, bicycling, and use of transit.

PL4-A Entry Locations and Relationships

PL4-A-1. Serving all Modes of Travel: Provide safe and convenient access points for all modes of travel.

PL4-A-2. Connections to All Modes: Site the primary entry in a location that logically relates to building uses and clearly connects all major points of access.

PL4-B Planning Ahead for Bicyclists

PL4-B-1. Early Planning: Consider existing and future bicycle traffic to and through the site early in the process so that access and connections are integrated into the project along with other modes of travel.

PL4-B-2. Bike Facilities: Facilities such as bike racks and storage, bike share stations, shower facilities and lockers for bicyclists should be located to maximize convenience, security, and safety.

PL4-B-3. Bike Connections: Facilitate connections to bicycle trails and infrastructure around and beyond the project.

DESIGN CONCEPT

DC1 Project Uses and Activities: Optimize the arrangement of uses and activities on site.

DC1-A Arrangement of Interior Uses

DC1-A-1. Visibility: Locate uses and services frequently used by the public in visible or prominent areas, such as at entries or along the street front.

DC1-A-2. Gathering Places: Maximize the use of any interior or exterior gathering spaces.

DC1-A-3. Flexibility: Build in flexibility so the building can adapt over time to evolving needs, such as the ability to change residential space to commercial space as needed.

DC1-B Vehicular Access and Circulation

DC1-B-1. Access Location and Design: Choose locations for vehicular access, service uses, and delivery areas that minimize conflict between vehicles and non-motorists wherever possible. Emphasize use of the sidewalk for pedestrians, and create safe and attractive conditions for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers.

DC1-C Parking and Service Uses

DC1-C-2. Visual Impacts: Reduce the visual impacts of parking lots, parking structures, entrances, and related signs and equipment as much as possible.

DC1-C-4. Service Uses: Locate and design service entries, loading docks, and trash receptacles away from pedestrian areas or to a less visible portion of the site to reduce possible impacts of these facilities on building aesthetics and pedestrian circulation.

DC2 Architectural Concept: Develop an architectural concept that will result in a unified and functional design that fits well on the site and within its surroundings.

DC2-A Massing

DC2-A-1. Site Characteristics and Uses: Arrange the mass of the building taking into consideration the characteristics of the site and the proposed uses of the building and its open space.

DC2-A-2. Reducing Perceived Mass: Use secondary architectural elements to reduce the perceived mass of larger projects.

DC2-B Architectural and Facade Composition

DC2-B-1. Façade Composition: Design all building facades—including alleys and visible roofs—considering the composition and architectural expression of the building as a whole. Ensure that all facades are attractive and well-proportioned.

DC2-B-2. Blank Walls: Avoid large blank walls along visible façades wherever possible. Where expanses of blank walls, retaining walls, or garage facades are unavoidable, include uses or design treatments at the street level that have human scale and are designed for pedestrians.

DC2-D Scale and Texture

DC2-D-1. Human Scale: Incorporate architectural features, elements, and details that are of human scale into the building facades, entries, retaining walls, courtyards, and exterior spaces in a manner that is consistent with the overall architectural concept

DC2-D-2. Texture: Design the character of the building, as expressed in the form, scale, and materials, to strive for a fine-grained scale, or “texture,” particularly at the street level and other areas where pedestrians predominate.

DC4 Exterior Elements and Finishes: Use appropriate and high quality elements and finishes for the building and its open spaces.

DC4-A Exterior Elements and Finishes

DC4-A-1. Exterior Finish Materials: Building exteriors should be constructed of durable and maintainable materials that are attractive even when viewed up close. Materials that have texture, pattern, or lend themselves to a high quality of detailing are encouraged.

DC4-B Signage

DC4-B-1. Scale and Character: Add interest to the streetscape with exterior signs and attachments that are appropriate in scale and character to the project and its environs.

DC4-D Trees, Landscape, and Hardscape Materials

DC4-D-1. Choice of Plant Materials: Reinforce the overall architectural and open space design concepts through the selection of landscape materials.

DC4-D-2. Hardscape Materials: Use exterior courtyards, plazas, and other hard surfaced areas as an opportunity to add color, texture, and/or pattern and enliven public areas through the use of distinctive and durable paving materials. Use permeable materials wherever possible.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES

At the time of the Early Design Guidance no departures were requested:

BOARD DIRECTION

At the conclusion of the EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE meeting, the Board recommended moving forward to MUP application.